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Book Review: Treasures of Gilcrease: Selections from the Permanent Collection

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Treasures of Gilcrease: Selections from the Permanent Collection. By Anne Morand, Kevin Smith, Daniel C. Swan, and Sarah Erwin. Tulsa: Gilcrease Museum, 2003; Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005. 198 pp. Photographs, illustrations, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

All who study the visual culture of the American West are familiar with the vast holdings of the Gilcrease Museum. This excellent introduction to the museum consists of five essays on its component collections. The introduction to Thomas Gilcrease himself (1890-1962) chronicles his mixed ethnicity (born of European and Muskogee-Creek heritage, he was enrolled as a Creek) and his success in the oil business. His several decades of avidly collecting the American objects, paintings, and manuscripts that would become the Gilcrease Museum (which initially opened in San Antonio, before moving to Tulsa in 1949) is told in a lively though brief essay.

The curator of each of the four collections (Fine Arts, Native American, Anthropology, and Library) has provided an introductory essay and short catalogue entries on highlights of each collection. The book is graced with more than 150 fine color plates, many of works well known to scholars. Paintings by Copley, Peale, Audubon, Catlin, Whistler, Bierstadt, Moran, Eakins, Remington, Russell, and others are illustrated and discussed. Gilcrease was also a notable patron of early twentieth-century Native art, collecting more than 500 paintings.

Works by Velarde, Kaboutie, Tsatoke, Crumbo, Tiger, Mopope, and others are featured here.

The Anthropology Collection, consisting of approximately 300,000 objects, is not limited to the American West, but encompasses the hemisphere as a whole. It is the one collection that has continued to be enlarged by major donations of archaeological and ethnological materials. The Library Collection of nearly 100,000 objects is also hemispheric in its range. Thomas Gilcrease purchased the entire holdings amassed by Philip Cole (1884-1941), a major collector of art and materials relating to western and Indian life, and a portion of the collections of the great British bibliophile Sir Thomas Phillips (1792-1872). Among the many important manuscripts are the oldest extant letter written from the western hemisphere in 1512, Theodor de Bry's famed sixteenth-century illustrated manuscript on the peoples of the new world, and the important seventeenth-century *Codex Canadensis*, written and illustrated by the Jesuit Louis Nicolas to chronicle the people and natural history of New France. A volume of fifty original Catlin watercolors bound by Sir Thomas Phillips is a notable example from the extensive Catlin collection.

This handsome and affordable book is geared toward the general public, so the introduction to each collection and the individual catalogue entries are brief and give little hint of the rich, complex, and sometimes disputatious story behind each object. Nevertheless, this is a valuable addition to the library of anyone interested in the American West.

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